

**NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw  
Committee**

**16th May 2017: 10:00 a.m.**

**AGENDA  
ITEM NO.**

**8**

**BIRD FOOD MODEL REPORT**

**Purpose: to provide information to members on the progress made on the issue of using a bird food model for shellfisheries in Morecambe Bay**

**Recommendation: approve the on-going work of Officers to progress the use of stock condition spreadsheets and an overall agreed tonnage for fisheries management**

**Background:**

1. The issue of using a model to assess bird food requirements in Morecambe Bay has been going on for many years, and needs resolution in order to progress the cockle and mussel Management Plans.
2. Due to the highly dynamic nature of mussel beds in particular in the Bay, both past and present NWIFCA scientists have a lack of confidence in results the existing model or derivatives thereof would produce, and do not consider them helpful to management.
3. In order for the NWIFCA to be confident that management of cockle and mussel fisheries is Habitats Regulations compliant and will not pose any risk to the SPA bird features, an alternative needs to be found.
4. Previous Natural England staff have proposed using a stock condition spreadsheet which provides a readily available up-to-date stock overview.

**Progress:**

5. Officers have been working with NE, RSPB and Wildlife Trust colleagues to progress the use of spreadsheets with agreed tonnage thresholds, which must be available for the birds at all times and before fishing can occur.
6. Bird feeding requirements vary depending on time of year. The highest cumulative amount is required at the beginning of September when large numbers of over-wintering waders return to the Bay. Officers are in discussion with colleagues to agree amounts per month, which are based on calculations using and adapting existing parameters from the known models, for four SPA bird species – oystercatcher, knot, eider and herring gull.
7. A meeting was held at which these figures and the stock condition spreadsheets were discussed, and the general principal of using them agreed, subject to close monitoring and review.
8. Further work and justification for the figures is on-going, and the spreadsheets have been slightly amended following useful comments.
9. Once agreed this approach and the figures will be presented to BMWG for industry to discuss.
10. Officers will bring the final proposal to TSB for approval.

11. The Senior Scientist facilitated a well-attended site visit to Foulney mussel skear, to improve understanding of colleagues on the nature of mussel beds in the north of the Bay.
12. Officers continue to work with Al Feather from Bangor University to assist in formulation of his PhD study.
13. Officers will present the spreadsheets to Members at TSB, and would welcome comments and suggestions.

**Senior Scientist**  
**29<sup>th</sup> April 2017**